6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

need of revetting, and great labour must have been expended in their construction. Steps were cut in the wells on opposite sides, to enable a man to descend and ascend."* When I was camped on the Nyanding river in February and March of 1932 only the pools on its lower reaches still contained water, and that was fouled and slimy. Mankac was the last place where there was still surface water to be found. Upstream cattle camps were centred around wells sunk in the beds of the river. The following description was written at Yik.

Most of the men leave whatever exhausted pool they have been camped around a few days in advance of the women, and cattle, and a few youths left in charge of the cattle, in order that they may prepare the wells, for the cattle must drink as soon as they arrive in their new quarters. Digging wells is a heavy task. The men begin by chopping out a circle in the bed of the river to define the circumference of the well and then pour water over the hard ground to make digging possible. For the first four to six feet down they cut through black river mud, caked hard for the first two feet or so but softer and moister afterwards. They then strike sand and cut through sand for another twenty to thirty feet till they reach water. All the wells at Yik, like those seen by Wilson at Muŏt tŏt, were estimated to be from 20 to 30 feet deep, so that Jackson's statement that " There are no wells in the Nuer country—unless a slight excavation of no greater depth than six feet in certain places can be dignifed by this name "† is incorrect. The wells at Yik were about a yard in circumference at the top but lower down they were slightly wider, being funnel-shaped. The sand gets moister the lower the well is dug.

Until a man has dug to some five feet down he can work unaided. Men take it in turn to excavate and throw the mud out of the hole to the surface. When the worker has reached sand an assistant remains at the edge of the well and hauls out the sand in a gourd which has a block of wood running across it and is enclosed in a net. The gourd is lowered by a cord and when filled with sand is hauled to

* Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, p. 140.

† Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

the surface, the sand being deposited a little way from the mouth of the well. Steps are hollowed out on the opposite sides of the walls at intervals of about two feet. 312 332

When water is reached a thick coil of grass tied with twine is lowered to the worker at the bottom and he places it round the sides of the well from the basis to two or three feet up the walls. This is done to prevent sand from falling from the walls into the water. The water is about a foot deep and is clear and fresh.

The work of digging a well takes two or three days. Each *gol*, household, has its own well and each well is surrounded by several circular troughs. A trough (*pany*) is fashioned from the mud excavated from the well. It is about four feet in diameter having a wall a foot high. The wall and floor are pounded hard with a cow's horn, or a bone, to make the trough water-tight, and they are then coated with a layer of sand to keep the water clean and make it attractive to the cattle.

Watering cattle from wells is an unceasing labour. Cattle drink from the troughs as soon as they are loosened in the morning; they return from grazing at midday for another drink, and are watered a third time in the evening before being tethered. Therefore three times a day the troughs have to be filled by the slow process of drawing gourdfuls of water from the well, the gourds being weighted and let down with a cord, and of carrying them to the troughs. Men work late at night to fill the troughs for the morning drink and a large part of the mornings and afternoons are spent in preparing for the midday and evening drinks. 312 233

To avoid confusion a man generally loosens a few of his cattle at a time so that they can drink their fill and then give place to others. While they are drinking their masters squat by the side of the trough to prevent any beast from putting its feet in the water and fouling it and to see that it does not damage the walls of the trough. If a cow puts its hoof on the wall or in the water he gives it a sharp rap on the leg with his club. The animals soon understand this rule and meekly circle round the trough, or kneel at the edge of the wall, to